IN THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A system comprising:

a router having a first interface for coupling to one or more computers located in a private home network, the router configured to perform address translation on packets exchanged between the computers located in the private home network and a wide area network;

one or more appliances coupled to the router independently of the computers;

the router configured to send one or more communications over the wide area network for logging into an instant messenger application as a client in response to receiving an event signal from one of the appliances and independently of the operational status of the computers;

the router configured to notify a user of the event signal using the instant messenger application; and

the router configured to control the appliance that sent the event signal according to a message generated by the user and received from the instant messenger application over the wide area network.

~~A method for interfacing with a home automation system using a router comprising:~~

~~receiving a control signal from an instant messenger application, the control signal received by the router via a communications network, wherein the transmission of the control signal is initiated by the instant messenger application;~~

~~transmitting the control signal to at least one appliance to control the appliance in accordance with the control signal; and~~

~~transmitting a reply to the instant messenger application regarding a status of the appliance.~~

2. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1 further comprising:

a home automation system interface coupled to the router over a second interface of the router that is separate from the first interface; and

the router configured to transmit a control signal to the home automation system for controlling the appliance that sent the event signal.

~~The method of Claim 1 further comprising:~~

~~transmitting the control signal to the appliance in accordance with a standardized home automation interface.~~

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

the router configured to establish a security policy for creating a firewall between the private home network and the wide area network;

wherein the security policy is configured to allow the user to monitor and control the appliances from an endpoint located remotely with respect to the private home network.

~~interfacing with the appliance via a home automation system interface unit configured to control a plurality of appliances, the interface conducted in accordance with a standardized home automation interface.~~

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 3 wherein the router controls a light fixture, a thermostat, an alarm system or a sprinkler system according to the message received from the instant messenger application ~~the home automation system interface unit is a transceiver configured to control the plurality of appliances~~.

5. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the router appears as an instant messenger friend on a graphical display on a remote endpoint for the user after the router logs into the instant messenger application ~~further comprising:~~

~~logging onto an instant messenger server; and~~

~~functioning as an instant messenger client to receive the control signal~~.

6. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1 wherein the router is further configured to interpret pseudo-English commands included in the message received from the instant messenger application for controlling the appliance that sent the event signal according to the pseudo-English commands ~~further comprising:~~

~~receiving an event signal from the appliance; and~~

~~transmitting a message to the instant messenger application regarding the event signal from the appliance~~.

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Currently Amended) An apparatus comprising:

a first interface coupled to one or more computers located in a first home network;

a second interface for coupling to at least one appliance located in a home associated with the first home network;

one or more processors; and

a memory coupled to the processors comprising instructions executable by the processors, the processors operable when executing the instructions to:

forward communications between the first home network and a second network to provide the computers that are located in the first home network with access to the second network;

send signaling messages over the second network for logging into an instant messenger application regardless of whether the computers are powered on and in response to receiving an event signal received over the second interface;

send one or more outgoing instant messages over the second network to notify a user of the event signal using the instant messenger application; and

control the appliance through the second interface according to one or more incoming instant messages received over the second network.

~~A router for interfacing with a home automation system via a communications network, comprising:~~

~~a network interface for communicating with a communications network;~~

~~a home automation system interface for communicating with a home automation system; and~~

~~a computer system for executing computer readable code, the computer system having a processor coupled to a memory, the memory having computer readable code which when executed by the processor causes the router to implement a method comprising:~~

~~receiving control signals from an instant messenger application, the control signal received by the router via the network interface, wherein the transmission of the control signal is initiated by the instant messenger application;~~

~~transmitting the control signal to at least one appliance in accordance with the control signal, the control signal transmitted to the appliance via the home automation system interface; and~~

~~transmitting a reply to the instant messenger application regarding a status of the appliance.~~

9. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the processors are further operable to transmit ~~router of Claim 8 wherein the method further comprises:~~

~~transmitting~~ the control signal to the appliance in accordance with a standardized home automation protocol ~~interface~~.

10. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 8 wherein the processors are further operable to interface ~~router of Claim 8 wherein the method further comprises:~~

~~interfacing~~ with the appliance via a home automation system interface unit configured to control the appliance ~~a plurality of appliances~~, the interfacing conducted in accordance with a standardized home automation protocol ~~interface~~.

11. (Currently Amended) The apparatus ~~router~~ of claim 10 wherein the home automation system interface unit is a transceiver configured to control the appliance ~~plurality of appliances~~.

12-13. (Cancelled)

14. (Currently Amended) The apparatus ~~router~~ of claim 8 wherein the processors are further operable to ~~method further comprises~~:

~~maintaining~~ maintain a firewall between the first and second networks ~~in the router~~; and

~~transmitting~~ transmit the outgoing messages ~~a message~~ to the instant messenger application through the firewall ~~wall~~.

15. (Currently Amended) A ~~router for interfacing with a home automation~~ system comprising:

means for transferring communications between a first network and a second network to provide one or more computers located in the first network with access to the second network;

means for logging into an instant messenger application server by sending login messages over the second network independently of the computers; and

means for controlling an appliance according to incoming messages received over the second network and generated by a user in communication with the instant messenger application server.

~~means for receiving a control signal from an instant messenger application, the control signal received by the router via a communications network, wherein the transmission of the control signal is initiated by the instant messenger application;~~

~~means for transmitting the control signal to at least one appliance to control the appliance in accordance with the control signal; and~~

~~means for transmitting a reply to the instant messenger application regarding a status of the appliance.~~

16. (Currently Amended) The system ~~router~~ of claim 15 wherein the means for controlling the appliance ~~control signal transmitting means~~ is configured to transmit a [[the]] control signal to the appliance in accordance with a standardized home automation interface.

17. (Currently Amended) The system ~~router~~ of claim 15 further comprising:

means for interfacing with the appliance via a home automation system interface unit configured to control a plurality of appliances, the interfacing means compatible with a standardized home automation interface.

18. (Currently Amended) The system ~~router~~ of claim 17 wherein the home automation system interface unit is a transceiver configured to control the plurality of appliances.

19. (Currently Amended) The system ~~router~~ of claim 15 [[of]] further comprising:

~~means for logging onto an instant messenger server; and~~

means of functioning as an instant messenger client of the instant messaging server to receive the incoming messages ~~control signal~~.

20-21. (Cancelled)

22. (Currently Amended) The system ~~router~~ of claim 15 wherein the ~~communications~~ second network is the Internet.

23. (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

transferring communications between a first network and a second network to provide one or more computers located in the first network with access to the second network;

sending login messages over the second network to an instant messenger application server, said sending of the login messages occurring independently of the computers;

controlling an appliance independently of the computers according to one or more incoming messages received over the second network.

~~A computer readable media having computer readable code which when executed by a processor of a router causes the router to implement a method of interfacing with a home automation system via a communications network, comprising:~~

~~receiving a control signal from an instant messenger application, the control signal received by the router via a communications network, wherein the transmission of the control signal is initiated by the instant messenger application;~~

~~transmitting the control signal to at least one appliance to control the appliance in accordance with the control signal; and~~

~~transmitting a reply to the instant messenger application regarding a status of the appliance.~~

24. (Currently Amended) The method ~~computer readable media~~ of claim 23 further comprising:

~~transmitting the control signal to the appliance in accordance with~~ controlling the appliance through a standardized home automation interface.

25. (Currently Amended) The method ~~computer readable media~~ of claim 23 further comprising:

interfacing with the appliance via a home automation system interface unit configured to control a plurality of appliances, the interfacing conducted in accordance with a standardized home automation interface.

26. (Currently Amended) The method ~~computer readable media~~ of claim 25 wherein the home automation system interface unit is a transceiver configured to control the plurality of appliances.

27. (Currently Amended) The method ~~computer readable media~~ a of claim 23 further comprising:

logging onto the instant messaging application server ~~an instant messenger server~~; and

functioning as an instant messenger client to receive the incoming messages ~~control signal~~.

28-29. (Cancelled)